



Separating Social and Physical Threats and Anxieties

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Introduction

- Many psychiatric conditions are characterized by excessive threat reactivity, including trauma-related and anxiety related disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).
- Overgeneralization of fear is a common symptom of these conditions (Ahrens et al., 2016; Lissek et al., 2014), but the nature of the feared stimulus may vary; some conditions are characterized by fear of physical threat (e.g. PTSD, panic disorder, and some specific phobias), while others are characterized by fear of negative social evaluation (e.g. social anxiety disorder).
- Understanding the relationship between physical threat sensitivity and social threat sensitivity may shed light on threat processing in psychiatric populations.
- However, the extent to which these traits are correlated in the population remains relatively unexamined.
- Hypothesis: Students with higher scores for intrepidity, as measured by the TF-44, will have lower scores for social anxiety, as measured by the LSAS.

Methods

Participants

- Subjects recruited from the University of Minnesota through the REP program
- $n=77$ (Male=26, Female=55)

Procedure

- Personality questionnaires administered through Qualtrics

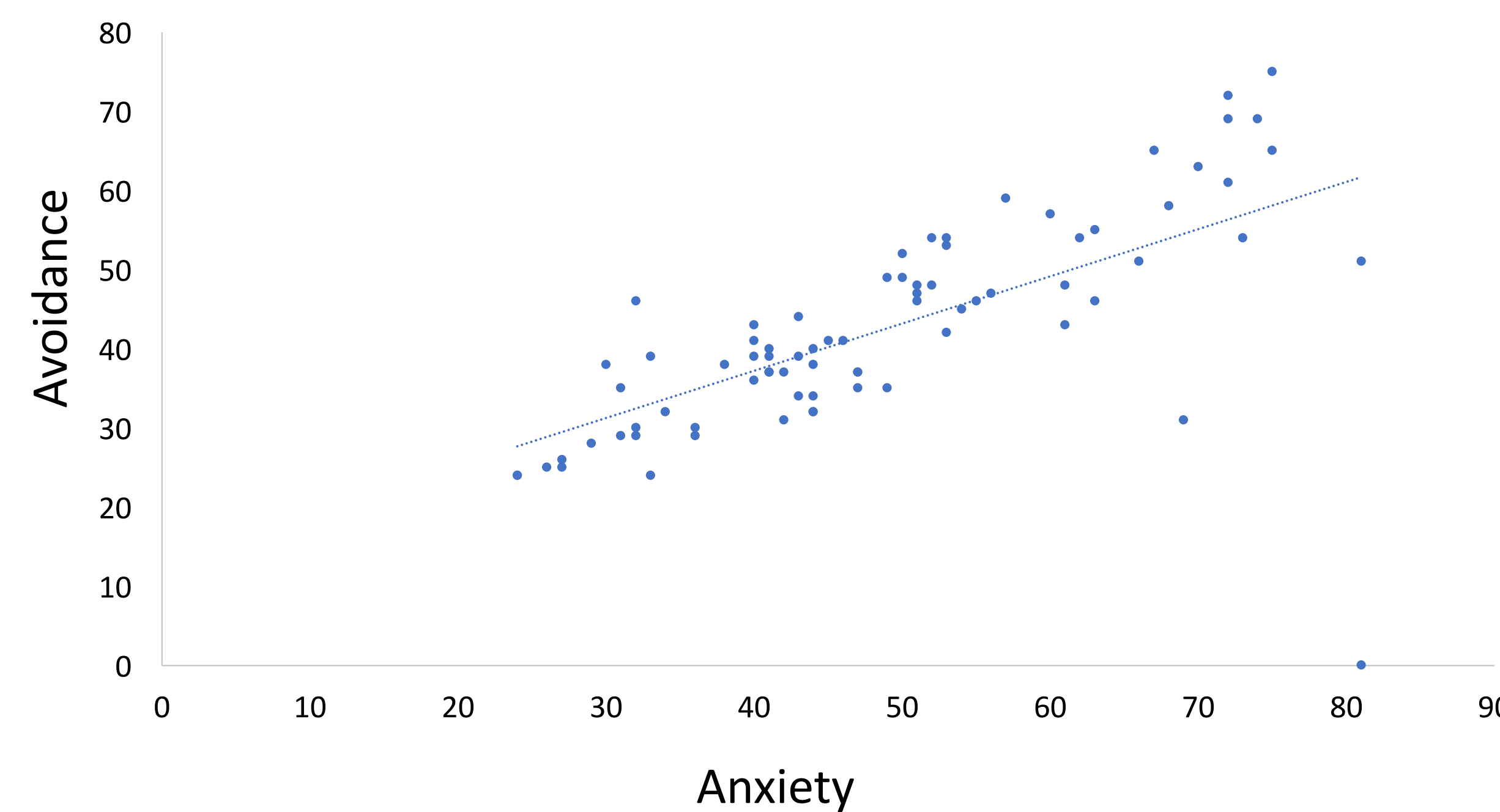
Measures

- Subjects completed the Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) and Trait Fear Inventory (TF-44) as part of their participation in the study
- Data from the LSAS and TF-44 were used to examine the relationship between intrepidity and social anxiety
- Scores from the LSAS and Intrepidity sub-score from the TF-44 were found
- Correlational tests between the LSAS and TF-44 corrected scores

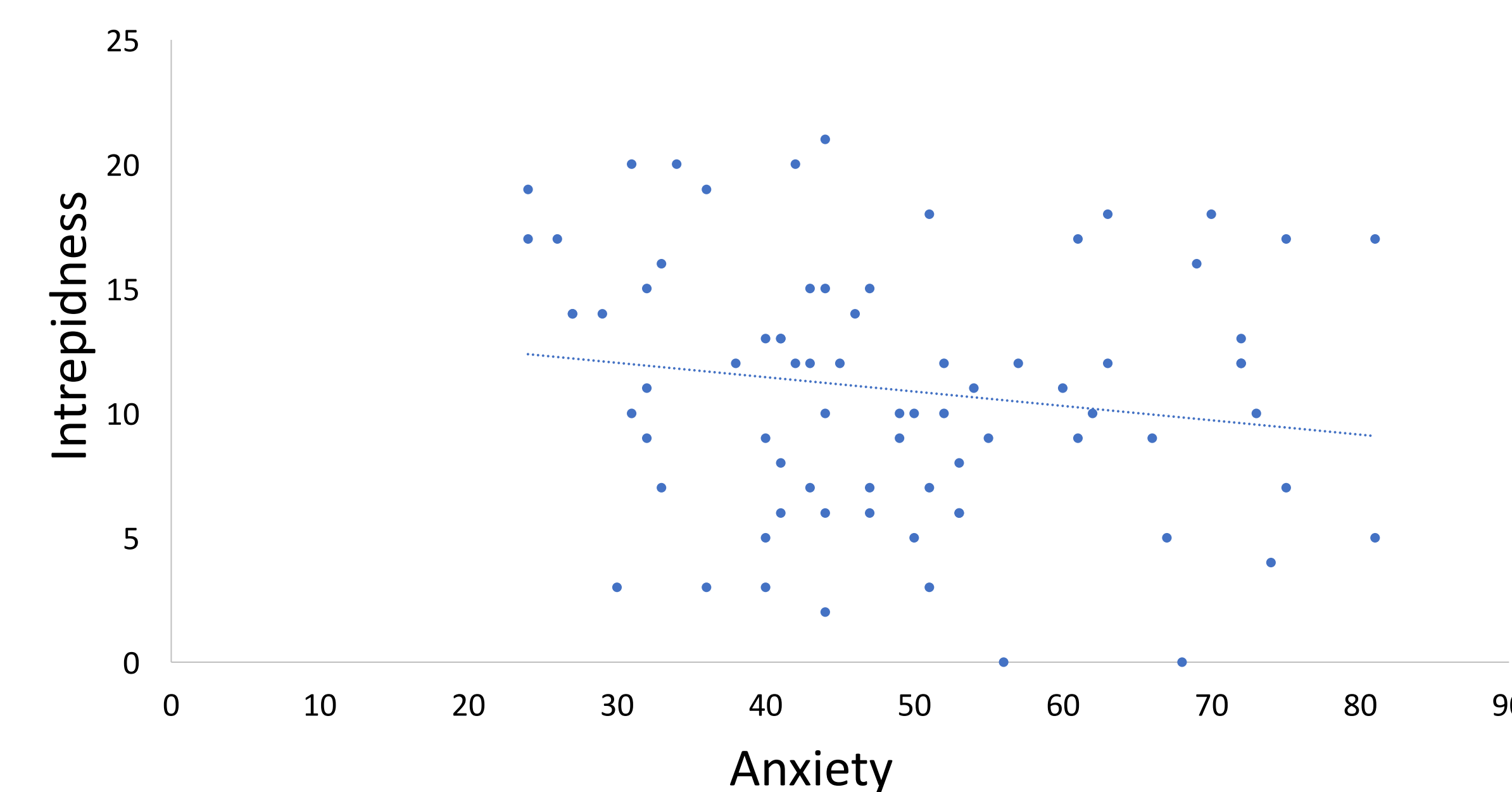
Results

- A strong and significant correlation is present between social anxiety and social avoidance: $r(77) = 0.848, p = 0.014$
- An insignificant correlation between intrepidity and social anxiety is present: $r(77) = -0.165, p = 0.151$
- A weak, but significant, correlation between intrepidity and social avoidance is present: $r(77) = -0.233, p = 0.042$

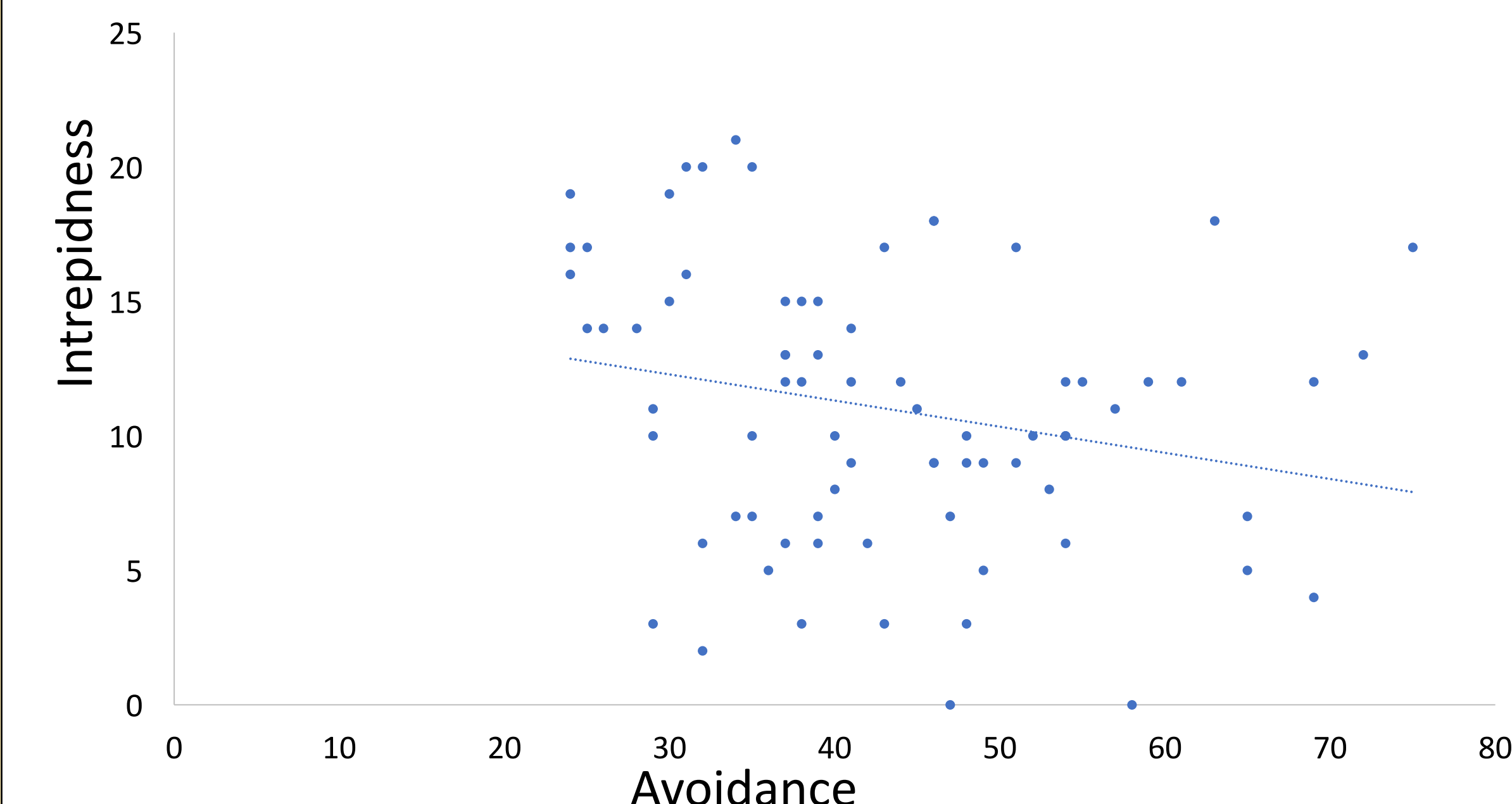
Social Anxiety and Avoidance



Social Anxiety and Intrepidity



Social Avoidance and Intrepidity



Discussion

- The prediction that there would be a negative correlation between social anxiety and intrepidity was not supported
- These results show no correlation between intrepidity and social anxiety, and it would be hard to predict an individual's level of one trait based on his or her score on the other trait
- However, there was a significant, although weak, correlation between social avoidance and intrepidity, though it would still be difficult to make an accurate prediction of an individual's level of a trait based on another
- This correlation suggests that fearlessness in the face of physical threats may also mean a person shows fearlessness in the face of social threats
- The relatively small sample size, for a study examining personality traits, may have affected the strength of the correlation found between social avoidance and intrepidity
- The population to which the questionnaires were administered was healthy, rather than a population with a diagnosis of social anxiety disorder, which may also account for the weak correlation
- The focus of this research was on only two personality traits; future research could find stronger relationships between other traits, anxieties, and behaviors

References

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